

Letters to President Allan Rock (and his administration), University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada – Summer 2008

This file contains the first of many letters sent from students and community members to President Allan Rock, University of Ottawa, Canada, in response to his decision to maintain the previous administration's July 14, 2008, decision to cancel the weekly documentary film and discussion series that had been hosted by Professor Denis Rancourt and offered continuously by the University since September 2005.

The University's decision coincides with a human rights complaint against the University before the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) that will be heard at the mediation step in September 2008. The complaint arose because the University of Ottawa, under previous president Gilles Patry, refused to provide Deaf sign language interpretation for the film and discussion events. Meanwhile the SFUO student union had stepped in to provide the needed Deaf access funding.

Note: The position of "Secretary of the University" (occupied by Pamela Harrod) is a vice-president position in the university administration. The office of Legal Counsel of the University reports to the Secretary of the University.

The relevant early background is summarized here:

<http://uofowatch.blogspot.com/2008/01/christian-values-do-not-apply-to-deaf.html>

A first media reaction is given here:

<http://ottawa.indymedia.ca/en/2008/07/8037.shtml>

The key communications documenting the University's decision and Professor Rancourt's counter arguments are posted here:

<http://www.archive.org/details/UOfOPresidentAllanRocksDecisionOnOttawaCinemaPolitica-Summer2008>

The first 25 signatures and comments on the petition to reinstate the film series are posted here:

<http://www.archive.org/details/First25PetitionSignatures-ReinstateOcpAtUof-Summer2008>

Many other University of Ottawa decisions are critiqued here:

<http://uofowatch.blogspot.com/>

From: **susan turansky** ()
Sent: July 17, 2008 8:34:04 PM
To: cabsec@uottawa.ca

Dear Ms. Harrod,

I am writing to express my extreme displeasure with your letter to Professor Denis Rancourt stating that Cinema Politica would not be given a space in the coming year because of the failure of the University Administration to fund a sign-language interpreter for a hearing impaired person which caused Cinema Politica to be in violation of the Human Rights Code.

The documentaries shown at Cinema Politica last year offered students and community members an opportunity to understand the world from a grass roots perspective. The documentary and following discussion about the crisis in Burma gave background and information that is not otherwise easily available. The opportunity to discuss such issues in a diverse group is an invaluable learning experience for everyone. There have been documentaries about Cuba's medical system, the Los Angeles Bus Rider's Union, the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty and many others that gave people a much wider perspective on what is happening in the world.

There are many films and documentaries that promote mainstream thinking, that talk about the world from the perspective of those in power. The documentaries presented at Cinema Politica often talked about events from the perspective of the less powerful.

Is your University about only allowing the dominant cultural view to be heard? Is it about allowing stereotypes of other cultures to be viewed only at your discretion? Or is it about learning and promoting diversity and the possibility of learning for everyone?

I find your decision to be a sad reflection of the present state of "higher education".

Sincerely

Susan Turansky
Ottawa

Subject:cinema politica films

Date:Tue, 29 Jul 2008 22:54:01 -0400 (EDT)

From:BOB NYE <

To:allan.rock@uottawa.ca

CC:dgr@uottawa.ca

Dear Mr. Rock,

Please assign a room, on campus, so that we can continue to hold our very popular films and have a discussion period after.

Mr. Patry and his cohorts did not appreciate that his students were benefiting from various social films and cancelled the room, out of spite, giving a ridiculous reason. (they even had me arrested for trespassing, while I was on campus, manning a table for the Sierra Club - totally non U of O related - my charges were thrown out of court - a total waste of time and tax-payer money)

Bob Nye a member of the public

Subject:Cancellation of Cinema Politica and request to meet

Date:Tue, 29 Jul 2008 14:19:12 -0400

From:Claude Haridge <

To:<allan.rock@uottawa.ca>

CC:Julie Cafley <jcafley@uottawa.ca>, <dgr@uottawa.ca>

Dear Mr.Rock,

I am writing to you concerning the cancellation of the University of Ottawa's Cinema Politica film series and discussion event which has been attended by hundreds of people over the past few years. I have sent a letter to Pamela Harrod expressing my disbelief at her unilateral decision. I am going to the next level up (that's you) since to date there has been no response from the University administration and my impression is that this issue is being ignored. Can you please confirm whether or not you will be intervening democratically on the behalf of the several hundred people who have been attending this very successful event? This is urgent for our planning for film screenings and guest speakers.

On a related issue, there are a few of us from both students and community members who would like to meet with you regarding the re-instatement of the Activism Course this Fall '08 and the issue regarding the cancellation of Cinema Politica. Despite their popularity, there are some in the administration who don't like it and have acted undemocratically to prevent it's offering this Fall. As a community member and former student of U of O watching this sorry saga, I am asking why our interests are not being served. This is why we are seeking your intervention as a last resort.

So welcome to the University of Ottawa! You will find that there is a very active student and community member body no doubt as you experienced it when you were here.

Can we meet next week?

Regards,

Claude Haridge, P.Eng. | Electro-Mechanical Engineer
Terrapoint Canada (a division of Ambercore)

Subject: Please reinstate OCP Friday Film series

Date: Thu, 7 Aug 2008 16:24:33 -0400

From: Jane Stinson <>

To: <president@uottawa.ca>, <allan.rock@uottawa.ca>

CC: <dgr@uottawa.ca>

Dear President Rock:

I am writing to ask you to reinstate the Friday night film series called Ottawa Cinema Politica. It is a long-standing series that provides a valuable service and forum to the community. It encourages members of the community to participate in this event on campus. This is an important way to introduce some members of the community to the University of Ottawa. It helps to bridge the distance that often exists between the university and community in which it is located.

I do hope you will see that this important event is reinstated.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jane Stinson
Education Officer
Union Development Department
Canadian Union of Public Employees

Subject: Friday night Cinema Politica Series

Date: Thu, 7 Aug 2008 16:46:49 -0400

From: Lindsay Stidwill <>

To: allan.rock@uottawa.ca

CC: dgr@uottawa.ca

Good Afternoon Mr. Rock,

I just received an email from Professor Denis Rancourt mentioning that the University of Ottawa has decided to ban the Friday evening Cinema Politica series. Is this correct?

I'm an Ottawa citizen and work here in the non-profit sector and while I do not attend the University of Ottawa, as a member of the Ottawa community, I have really enjoyed coming to the University to see the Friday night films and engage in discussion with other members of the community.

Mr. Rancourt's Friday evening series has been a wonderful forum for members of the community, students, and professors to get together and talk about things in our local and global community that concern us. I know that many people enjoy the Friday night series and would really be disappointed if it did not continue.

Is there a specific reason that this series is being cancelled?

The professor himself is interested in continuing administering the weekly film and discussion sessions. It seems quite silly that you would not allow this. I look hearing why the University would end such a fantastic programme.

Yours Sincerely,

Lindsay Stidwill

Subject:Support from the Community

Date:Thu, 7 Aug 2008 16:57:04 -0400

From:SPAO Administration <

To:allan.rock@uottawa.ca

CC:dgr@uottawa.ca, secruniv@uottawa.ca

Good Afternoon,

I would like to lend my support to the reinstatement of the weekly film screening series facilitated by Professor Denis Rancourt that has caused such a fuss as of late. I'm not entirely familiar with all of the strife associated with the cancellation of the course, but I feel that it is an invaluable opportunity for the community, the students of other institutions and the students and faculty of your university. I myself have been to the screening and discussions on a number of occasions and thoroughly recommend that you come down for an evening once it is reinstated and experience the energy and enthusiasm of the participants. You would be fortunate to have this type of interaction in all of the classes at the university.

As a young student leader yourself you once knew the value of open discussion of controversial issues and I only hope that your years in politics have not diluted your ability to do what is right for those you govern.

If you have any questions feel free to get in touch with me.

Rob Hughes
Coordinator of Part Time Studies

**SCHOOL OF THE
PHOTOGRAPHIC
ARTS: OTTAWA**

Subject:U of O: Deguire human rights case & Cinema Politica

Date:Thu, 7 Aug 2008 14:35:10 -0700 (PDT)

From:Ronda Brook <

Reply-To:

To:allan.rock@uottawa.ca

CC:Disabilities CSD CentreForStudntsWith <csd@sfuo.ca>, Denis Rancourt
<dgr@physics.uottawa.ca>

As a graduate of the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Law, I was very surprised at your decision to further inflame the Deguire human rights case against the University by canceling the University's Cinema Politica film series.

I urge you to consider how canceling Cinema Politica would influence the Ontario Human Rights Commission's decision and the reputation of our University. I don't want to keep hearing that our University is "too cheap to respect human rights". I strongly recommend that the University continue to offer the excellent Cinema Politica film series, this time honouring the request for sign-language interpretation.

Please also confirm for me that the Cinema Politica film series will continue; I look forward to watching many of this year's Cinema Politica films at the University of Ottawa.

Ronda J. Brook
LL.B. (University of Ottawa, 1990)

Subject:alumni letter to president

Date:Thu, 7 Aug 2008 18:16:18 -0400 (EDT)

From:Deborah Smith <

To:allan.rock@uottawa.ca

Mr Allan Rock
President
University of Ottawa

Dear Mr. Rock,

As an alumnus of the University of Ottawa (Faculty of Law, 2006), I am writing to express my concern at the University's refusal to support the film and discussion nights (previously known as Ottawa Cinema Politica), hosted by Professor Denis Rancourt.

I had hoped that with a change in leadership in the

University, we would also see a positive shift in the University's approach to professor Rancourt's work, which is supported by so many of us in Ottawa. Instead, it would appear that there will be ongoing efforts to stifle freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, community solidarity, academic freedom and positive action in favour of social justice.

When studying at Ottawa U's Faculty of Law, we were often encouraged to take up work towards social justice, internet freedom, human rights. It's sad to see the University take an opposite approach.

Please revisit your decision in relation to the film and discussion nights, as they are an important contribution to Ottawa. I look forward to your reply.

Respectfully,
Deborah L. Smith
Ottawa

Subject:Cinema Politica

Date:Thu, 7 Aug 2008 18:46:43 -0400

From:Bob Luce <>

To:<allan.rock@uottawa.ca>

Dear Mr. Rock,

My daughter is a former University of Ottawa student. She invited me to attend several of the Friday night films presented by Prof. Rancourt. I found that these films, and the discussions that followed, brought a healthy debate of current social issues to the university community. Universities are more than simply what is taught in formal classes of traditional subjects. The film series was an important part of those important extracurricular activities, and it was well attended by hundreds of individuals. The fact that these sessions were extended to the public helped the University reach out and promote participation by the broader community. While there are other, sporadic events to which the public is invited, I see few other ongoing university activities that encourage the community to participate in serious debate of current social issues.

I strongly encourage the University to find a way to continue its support for this program.

Thank you,

Robert Luce

Subject: Friday film/discussion hall at MacDonald (U of O campus)

From: "BOB NYE" <>
Date: Thu, 7 August, 2008 8:04 pm
To: allan.rock@uottawa.ca
Cc: dgr@uottawa.ca

Dear Mr. Rock,

The films were very popular and mind opening for your students.

Since you value your student's complete education, please re-consider giving a room, on campus, for their knowledge.

Many community members and other interested people will benefit from having our Friday films back this fall.

Subject:Cinema Politica
Date:Thu, 07 Aug 2008 22:08:10 -0400
From:Linda Belanger <>
To:allan.rock@uottawa.ca

Dear Mr. Rock:

Denis Rancourt's cinema and discussion evenings are very valuable to this community. He is an excellent moderator of the discussions who lets everyone have their say. The events help Ottawan concerned about a variety of issues connect and exchange ideas. I would very much like to see these events re-instated at the U of O.

Linda Belanger
Ottawa

Subject:Friday Film Series (Formerly "Ottawa Cinema Politica")
Date:Thu, 7 Aug 2008 19:06:46 -0400 (EDT)
From:Mike Mallett <>
To:allan.rock@uottawa.ca
CC:dgr@uottawa.ca

Dear Mr. Rock,

It has been brought to my attention that a fairly well established (3 academic years) film series hosted by University of Ottawa professor Denis Rancourt has been cancelled by your office.

I have been a citizen of the Ottawa area for all 27 years of my life. I am currently studying Radio at Algonquin College, and I am always interested in alternative sources of information; That is to say that I believe we, the citizens of Canada, are facing a massive conglomeration of media sources, and we must now pay special attention to guard our fewer and fewer venues for alternative media. I for one do not want to get all of my news and information from just Astral Media, Rogers Communication, Newcap, CTV Globemedia, and the CBC.

The Friday film series hosted by Denis Rancourt has provided me personally with many oppotunities to explore important topics and relate these subjects to my friends and other community members (your neighbours).

I have read the letter which Mr. Rancourt addressed to your office July 19, 2008. Personally I feel he was perhaps a bit aggressive with his tone, and his attempt to paraphrase the University's position was a tad over the top - but hey, he's only human, just like you and me. ;)

Your decision not to respond to his communiqué expresses a grave complacency on the part of your administration. You have a professor who is genuinely concerned about a repression of his opportunities, efforts, and indeed his duties to the community, but you have chosen to ignore him.

I will be bringing this issue to the attention of all University of Ottawa students I encounter: members of our community, and the people who pay your salary.

Please respond to Mr. Rancourt as soon as possible.

Thank you.

Mike Mallett

Subject:Friends of Burma letter to Allan Rock regarding Cinema Politica

Date:Fri, 8 Aug 2008 02:12:23 -0700 (PDT)

From:mcleod kevin <

To:president@UOTTAWA.CA, allan.rock@UOTTAWA.CA

CC:dgr@UOTTAWA.CA

To Allan Rock and the Administration at the University of Ottawa

Subject: Cinema Politica

8 August 2008

The Canadian Friends of Burma (CFOB) is extremely disappointed that the University of Ottawa has canceled the 2008-2009 season of Cinema Politica. Last October in collaboration with Denis Rancourt and the Cinema Politica committee at Ottawa U, CFOB screened an important documentary about the use of forced labour in Burma to a full capacity audience. Following the film screening two exiled political activists from Burma answered the audience's questions and discussed the monk led protests that were occurring in the streets of Rangoon.

For the upcoming Cinema Politica season Professor Rancourt had planned to show two more Burma related documentaries. The first film "Inside Burma Land of Fear" examines Burma's 1988 student led nation wide uprising and the brutal government crackdown that followed which killed more than 30,000 people. Three survivors of the violent crackdown have agreed to speak to the audience after the film and share their own stories to commemorate the 20 anniversary of the mass uprising. The second film "Anonymously Yours" is about Burmese refugee women who have fled to Thailand only to be forced to work in the sex industry. Following the film we had planned on having Ms. Paw Wah a respected women's rights activist speak about the dire situation that female Burmese refugees face in Thailand, Malaysia and India.

The Canadian Friends of Burma is a small not for profit organization with one paid staff person and we do not have the kind of budget that would allow for us to book a large theater and projection equipment for a public film screening. We were therefore absolutely delighted to be invited back this year to Cinema Politica.

CFOB is not the only civil society organization that has benefited from Cinema Politica, groups concerned with issues as diverse as Haiti, homelessness, residential schools, narcotics policy and the justice system have also screened films in partnership with Cinema Poltica at Ottawa U.

CFOB strongly urges the University of Ottawa to reconsider the decision to cancel the Cinema Politica film screenings. The viewpoints expressed by the films that are screened at Cinema Politica need to be heard.

I personally do not look forward to telling survivors of one of history's most ferocious acts of violence against unarmed protesters, that their opportunity to speak to the University of Ottawa community has been canceled.

Here is a brief clip from "Inside Burma Land of Fear"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBBklnVsm5M>

Kevin McLeod
Member of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Friends of Burma

The Canadian Friends of Burma (CFOB) is federally incorporated, national non-governmental

organization working for democracy and human rights in Burma since 1991. Contact: Suite 206, 145 Spruce St., Ottawa, K1R 6P1; Tel: 613.237.8056; Web: www.cfob.org

Subject:Petition to

Date:Fri, 08 Aug 2008 16:59:13 -0400 (EDT)

From:Eduardo Barrera Ramirez <

To:allan.rock@uottawa.ca

CC:dgr@uottawa.ca

July 19, 2008

Allan Rock
President
University of Ottawa
(by email: allan.rock@uottawa.ca)

Re: Petition to reinstate Ottawa Cinema Politica

Dear President Rock,

I am writing this letter to you in order to ask you to reconsider and change your decision regarding the Friday film and discussion series organized by Prof. Denis G. Rancourt at the University of Ottawa.

I am a second year student in Engineering in Physics at Carleton University. I became aware of Prof. Rancourt's weekly film sessions through a number of Carleton students who attended OCP regularly. I attended a film session myself and found it to be very interesting and a great opportunity to learn from other people's ideas and communicate my own. These film sessions have surely enriched and redefined the way I think and behave. This is a great community service and I am sure many others would agree with me.

I cannot tell how disappointed I was when I learned that Ottawa University had decided to end these sessions. I also do NOT understand why this decision was made, even though I read through Prof. Rancourt's explanation on his email. I think OCP offers a great way to help people learn from one another and to open our minds to new ideas and ways of thinking.

This unfair decision leads me to conclude that cancelling OCP is only due to reasons not related with Prof. Rancourt's workload or any of the other excuses given to him. I still believe that most of the time "authority is the greatest enemy of truth", Einstein. Please reconsider your decision and allow the community and myself to benefit from Prof. Rancourt's film sessions.

Thank you for your time,

From:
To: allanrock@uottawa.ca
CC:
Subject:
Date: Fri, 8 Aug 2008 18:58:50 -0400

President Rock,

Congratulations on your recent appointment as President of the University of Ottawa.

We were classmates for two years (1960-62) at the University of Ottawa High School, Grade 9 and 10. My Father was in the military and we moved from Ottawa to Whithorse where I graduated, eventually getting my law degree in New Brunswick and practicing there until 2005. I am now in Ottawa practicing.

I did not realize until about four years ago that you were a classmate, and that was brought to my attention by another former classmate of ours' ? Bradley, who was working at the Ottawa Airport in charge of luggage security. He recognized my name on luggage and we got talking.

During the past few years I have enjoyed attending on an irregular basis the Friday night programme on various controversial subjects put on by one of your Professors. It is unfortunate that it has been discontinued, as the course provided another perspective to many institutions that I accepted without question. I think that your University offering an opportunity to question and review subjects from the banking establishment to the Bush legacy is enlightening and proper. I would not have been aware of these issues without having benefited from attendance at your University course. However, I do appreciate that I may not be cognizant of all the matters that have resulted in this decision, but from my perspective as a bystander, it is a regrettable one.

I do hope that one of these days we will meet. I wish you all the best in your endeavours.

Yours truly,

John Hazen

Subject: Cinema Politica
Date: Sat, 9 Aug 2008 09:34:02 -0400
From: Anne Caza <>
To: <allan.rock@uottawa.ca>
CC: <dgr@uottawa.ca>

August 9, 2008

Allan Rock
President
University of Ottawa

Re: Ottawa Cinema Politica

Dear President Rock,

It is an honour for the University of Ottawa to have such activities as Cinema Politica facilitated by Professor Denis Rancourt. I have been attending the sessions and have found that a great and wonderful part of me was awakened just by the opportunities made possible by this activity. Perceived or real barriers were raised. I felt that I had more resources. Is that not what education is about?

President Rock, it is doing a disservice to humanity to silence people. Please take the time to view what Cinema Politica is about and judge for yourself. The Brain that runs our world cannot be limited to the few who make today's headlines. Your input and mine need to be counted.

President Rock, this is not something trivial. Please consider what your world would be like if part of your brain went missing! Our world needs everyone. Cinema Politica is helping make this happen.

Yours truly,
Anne Caza
Citizen

Subject:Ottawa Cinema Politica

Date:Sun, 10 Aug 2008 00:54:57 -0400

From:Robert Alvo <

To:allan.rock@uottawa.ca

CC:dgr@uottawa.ca

Dear Mr. Rock:

I don't understand why Ottawa Cinema Politica seems to be an irritant for the Administration of the University of Ottawa. Your predecessors seem to have been afraid of nothing at all. Maybe I have received only part of the story. Can you please clarify the situation for me or do your best to reinstate the program?

Respectfully,
Robert Alvo
Member of the Ottawa community

Subject:Cinema Politica

Date:Mon, 11 Aug 2008 10:08:03 -0400

From:Jade Pichette <

To:allan.rock@uottawa.ca

CC:dgr@uottawa.ca

Dear Allan Rock,

As a former Political Science student at the University of Ottawa I am very concerned that the weekly movie nights run by Prof. Denis Rancourt have been canceled. As a Political Science student I found them very helpful to my education as a compliment to my regular courses. It helped me look at a variety of issues and discuss them in an open setting which is something that some of my Politics professors stressed as an important part of politics.

I am deeply concerned why an important part of this educational institution has been shut down. I have been going since the movie nights started in 2005. I have never seen the movie night as detrimental to the University, but only as an important service for both the University and community at large. Where there are serious issues with students not very many options on Friday nights but, bars this provides a wholesome option on Friday nights which enhance students' education instead of detracting from it.

As a former student I would really like to know the reasoning behind shutting down the movie night and, I highly encourage you to reinstate it.

Sincerely,

Jade Pichette
University of Ottawa Alumna
Concerned Citizen

Subject:Ottawa Cinema Politica series

Date:Mon, 11 Aug 2008 13:07:25 -0700 (PDT)

From:Pantea Jafari <

Reply-To:panteajafari@yahoo.com

To:allan.rock@uottawa.ca

CC:dgr@uottawa.ca

Dear Mr. Rock,

It is with great disappointment that I hear of the university's decision to cancel the documentary series that have ignited critical thinking in so many Ottawa community members over the last few years.

As a regular attendant of the documentary series, I have always looked forward to Friday nights, knowing I will be watching an intriguing documentary that will get my analytic juices flowing, followed by an open minded discussion of the issues raised in the documentary and how they effects our everyday lives. It has been a haven for free thinking and camaraderie unlike any experienced inside or outside a classroom. It is shameful to see my own university administration shut down such a gift to the community when it takes so little from you to enable it. Instead of trying to shut it down, you should be proud of this growing initiative and promote it as a symbol of an open-minded learning environment for students that all universities should aspire to. It should be advertised as a selling feature inticing potential students to choose U of O over other universities!

I urge you to reconsider your decision, and optimistically look forward to the return of the film series in the fall.

Best Regards,

Pantea Jafari
LLB Candidate
University of Ottawa

Subject:Re: Friday Film Series (Formerly "Ottawa Cinema Politica")

Date:Mon, 11 Aug 2008 21:02:32 -0400

From:Mike Mallett <

To:Secrétaire de l'université - Secretary of the University <secruniv@uottawa.ca>, allan.rock@uottawa.ca

CC:dgr@uottawa.ca

References:<50499F689592054DB0E6D1D6D79033D701143DD0@MSMAIL1.uottawa.o.univ>
<02D4BC9A936EC44D8859400FFBDF6761F91456@MSMAIL1.uottawa.o.univ>

Yes, I am aware that Mr. Rancourt's personally addressed letter to Allan Rock of July 19, 2008 was responded to by a member of his office. It is also my understanding that this third party was specifically referred to in Mr. Rancourt's message of July 19, 2008, and was indicated by Mr. Rancourt as acting with the full authority of the University administration in the time between Dr. Patry's end of term and Mr. Rock's commencement July 15. Therefore, I would like to clarify the situation, and my request of August 7, 2008:

Mr. Rock was asked personally to address the concerns of one of the University's professors, and has twice shown that he is not interested in personally responding to these concerns.

Does the administration care to endorse, or at the very least acknowledge, the Student Federation's offer to pay for sign-language interpretation? Any word from your office on that matter would be greatly appreciated.

Thank You,
--Mike Mallett

Secrétaire de l'université - Secretary of the University wrote:

>
> Good afternoon,
>
> Thank you for your email of August 7, 2008 addressed to Mr. Allan
> Rock, and which he has directed to my attention for reply.
>
> As you may be aware, a letter was recently sent to the organizers of
> Cinema Politica explaining the reasons why the University of Ottawa
> will not provide a venue for this event.
>
> We wish to clarify that we have responded to Mr. Rancourt's letter of
> July 19th, 2008.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> Pamela A. Harrod
>
> Secretary of the University/Secrétaire de l'Université
> Université d'Ottawa/Ottawa University
> 550, rue Cumberland Street, Ottawa ON K1N 6N5
> Tel: (613) 562-5950
> Fax: (613) 562-5178
> secruniv@uottawa.ca
>
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>
> ----- Original Message -----
>
> From: Mike Mallett <>
> To: Allan Rock
> Cc: dgr@uottawa.ca <dgr@uottawa.ca>
> Sent: Thu Aug 07 19:06:46 2008
> Subject: Friday Film Series (Formerly "Ottawa Cinema Politica")
>
> Dear Mr. Rock,
>
> It has been brought to my attention that a fairly well established (3
> academic years) film series hosted by University of Ottawa professor Denis
> Rancourt has been cancelled by your office.
>
> I have been a citizen of the Ottawa area for all 27 years of my life. I am
> currently studying Radio at Algonquin College, and I am always interested
> in alternative sources of information; That is to say that I believe we,
> the citizens of Canada, are facing a massive conglomeration of media
> sources, and we must now pay special attention to guard our fewer and
> fewer venues for alternative media. I for one do not want to get all of m
> news and information from just Astral Media, Rogers Communication, Newcap,
> CTV Globemedia, and the CBC.
>
> The Friday film series hosted by Denis Rancourt has provided me personally
> with many oppotunities to explore important topics and relate these
> subjects to my friends and other community members (your neighbours).
>
> I have read the letter which Mr. Rancourt addressed to your office July
> 19, 2008. Personally I feel he was perhaps a bit aggressive with his tone,
> and his attempt to paraphrase the University's position was a tad over the
> top - but hey, he's only human, just like you and me. :)
>
> Your decision not to respond to his communiqué expresses a grave
> complacency on the part of your administration. You have a professor who
> is genuinely concerned about a repression of his opportunities, efforts,
> and indeed his duties to the community, but you have chosen to ignore him.
>
> I will be bringing this issue to the attention of all University of Ottawa
> students I encounter: members of our community, and the people who pay
> your salary.
>
> Please respond to Mr. Rancourt as soon as possible.

>
> Thank you.
> Mike Mallett

Subject: Professor Rancourt's film and discussion series

Date: Mon, 11 Aug 2008 23:33:08 -0400

From: Martha Ruben <

To: <allan.rock@uottawa.ca>

CC: <dgr@uottawa.ca>

Mr. Alan Rock
President University of Ottawa
Dear Mr. Rock:

I consider that the previous administration made a real mistake and suspect that it must have been some misunderstanding regarding the significance and the impact of Professor Rancourt's film and discussion series for our community. I hope that you decide to give us a chance and that you allow us to run for one more year (as a trial) while joining some of our sessions, enjoying the movies and the discussions, and sharing with us your vision. As an Ottawa's community member always looking for new ideas and knowledge, I was thrilled when I discovered the University of Ottawa's Cinema Politique, in 2006. After spending my life in different countries and continents (I got my MD in Uruguay, a post-doc in Germany, and a PhD at Mc Master University, in Hamilton) I was shocked by the apparent apathy of Canadian students... Therefore, I felt overjoyed by the possibility of exploring further the human nature and of dreaming the future within a Canadian environment.

I was very proud of "my" university when I saw that it was offering this service (I feel linked to the University of Ottawa because I spent many years working in the laboratories; I did a post doc at the Department of Medicine and lately I was temporarily a faculty member; currently, I still collaborate with faculty members, and my daughter just finished her B Sc in Human Kinetics).

As Noam Chomsky says (I am not quoting his words but his ideas), we have just two pathways to the future... either we allow the blind, amoral, selfish powers of the corporations and of similar entities to drive us to our destruction (and maybe even the destruction of our planet), or we join our efforts to form caring and nurturing communities, which could elaborate a bright and promising future for our children and for our children's children... I think and I hope that groups like Professor Rancourt's film and discussion series at the University of Ottawa could be the source and inspiration for such communities. The future will speak... but, please, keep the doors of the university open... and support Dennis' efforts to motivate the new generations...

Thanks

Martha Ruben, MD, PhD

Martha Ruben, M.D., Ph.D.
Biomedical Consultant,
Biomedical Writer, Editor,
and Translator (EN<>SP)

Subject:Re: Cancellation of Cinema Politica at the University of Ottawa

Date:Tue, 12 Aug 2008 15:06:39 -0400

From:Ben Saifer <

To:allan.rock@uottawa.ca

CC:dgr@uottawa.ca

Dear President Rock,

Last year I had the pleasure of attending numerous film and discussion evenings (previously named Ottawa Cinema Politica) at the University of Ottawa hosted by Professor Denis Rancourt. I found Cinema Politica to be a respectful and thought-provoking dialogue between those at the university and in the wider community - a unique opportunity emphasizing that education is a process of intellectual engagement among citizens who are both learners and teachers of one another. Because it is encountered so seldom, I was impressed by Prof. Rancourt's encouragement of self-examination and honest exploration of the root causes of problems that our society faces. Most exemplary was his respect for educational praxis, as he harmonized his words with his actions as an educator. Participating in such a unique community-driven project made the mission statement of University of Ottawa's Vision 2010 come to life. Phrases such "A university that builds strong partnerships to fulfill its social responsibilities" and "A university that values its community" did not seem like hollow platitudes but truly exceptional traits. This experience was so engaging that it was a key factor compelling me to begin a Masters degree this coming September.

I was recently informed that the University is now refusing to allocate a room for Prof. Rancourt's Friday night film screenings. After reading Pamela Harrod's well-publicized letter justifying this decision, I cannot help but find it to be politically motivated, a characteristic certainly not befitting of "Canada's University." I am sure you are well aware of the previous administration's refusal to provide sign-language interpretation at Cinema Politica to community member Genevieve Deguire, which has resulted in a still-unresolved complaint to the Ottawa Human Rights Commission. Considering the previous administration's intransigence on this matter, the fact that Ms. Harrod grounds her rationale on Cinema Politica's failure to "provide interpretative services at its events as required by the Ontario Human Rights Code" penalizes Professor Rancourt for a failing of the U of O administration. If administrative failure to provide sign-language had occurred in any other program, the result would have been to correct the oversight going forward, not to cancel the program itself.

My first experience with the University of Ottawa was through Cinema Politica and was one of the most intellectually empowering experiences in recent memory. This most recent about-face by the University is anything but. This serious matter deserves immediate attention and resolution that does not penalize academic initiative, innovation, openness and creativity. Too often university professors approach students as blank slates upon which they intend to imprint what they deem 'correct'. Moreover they expect to conduct this indoctrination without self-criticism and without critical examination of the role and responsibility of universities in the wider society. I do hope the University of Ottawa can depend upon you as its new president to opt decisively in favour of robust higher education and academic freedom, which Prof. Rancourt exemplifies.

I look forward to your reply.

Respectfully,

Ben Saifer

Subject:cinéma politica ottawa

Date:Wed, 13 Aug 2008 12:51:23 -0400 (EDT)

From:emilie gravel

To:allan.rock@uottawa.ca

CC:dgr@uottawa.ca

Monsieur le président,

Je fus informée tout récemment que l'Université d'Ottawa ne pouvait se permettre de financer le service d'accessibilité aux malentendants demandé par Cinéma Politica. C'est avec grand regret que je reçois cette nouvelle sachant que l'Université accusa un surplus de 67 millions de dollars pour l'année fiscale précédente. Mais c'est avec indignation que j'ai appris que l'Université d'Ottawa avait aussi sournoisement décidé d'abolir Cinéma Politica Ottawa sous prétexte qu'il n'offrait pas de service aux malentendants; ça n'a pas de sens puisque c'est l'Université d'Ottawa elle-même qui avait refusé de financer ce service. Je suis extrêmement déçue d'apprendre que l'Université d'Ottawa fit usage de manigances de la sorte afin de justifier sa position. À ma connaissance, ce type de tactique qui relève du sophisme est utilisée lorsque une personne ou un parti refuse toute transparence car désireux de cacher les vrais motifs de sa décision.

Les hautes sphères de l'Université auraient-elles quelque chose à cacher? Cinéma Politica Ottawa serait-elle une activité qui compromettrait leur agenda? Ont-elles peur que les étudiants développent dangereusement leur esprit critique? Cela serait pourtant absurde étant donné qu'une Université est par définition un haut lieu du savoir, de la connaissance et donc de la remise en question. . .

Cinéma Politica Ottawa est un service essentiel à la vie communautaire de l'Université. Par son contenu, il permet entre autres aux membres de la

communauté de se conscientiser sur de nombreux sujets d'actualité, d'encourager la réflexion ainsi que la pensée critique, trois activités qui font malheureusement défaut à notre culture populaire et même à notre culture étudiante. Il serait vraiment fâcheux, et évidemment absurde, que l'Université d'Ottawa abolisse une activité qui promeut l'épanouissement intellectuel de ses membres. Monsieur le Président, c'est avec humilité que je vous demande votre appui dans le processus de révocation de la décision prise par l'Université d'Ottawa.

Veillez agréer, Monsieur le Président, l'assurance de notre considération distinguée

Emilie Gravel
